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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM: AMEMBASSY, HELSINKI

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

DESP. NO. 358

DATE: February 16, 1956

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SUBJECT: Exchange of Remarks at Signing of Porkkala Agreement

The physical release of Porkkala naval base by the Soviet forces, as provided in the agreement signed in Moscow on September 19, 1955, was formalized on January 26 with the signing of the transfer agreement at the Soviet Embassy in Helsinki. Soviet First Deputy Premier PERVUKHIN came to Finland at the head of a delegation of imposing rank for the announced purpose of signing the agreement on behalf of the Soviet Government. As a consequence of this visit, reportedly a last-minute surprise to the Finnish Government, Prime Minister KEKKONEN represented the Finnish Government at the ceremony. (An officer of the Foreign Office told the undersigned that the idea of such a visit had been discussed earlier, but until January 22 the Finns had assumed that it was dropped.)

The brief speeches (translations enclosed) made by Pervukhin and Kekkonen following the signature provide a current catalog of the two governments' respective "public" positions relative to the release of Porkkala and, both explicitly and implicitly, to the state of Finnish-Soviet relations. Basic factors such as these had become somewhat obscured since September by public speculation concerning the motives behind the Soviet action as they related to the world situation, Soviet relations with Finland and the personal fortunes of Prime Minister Kekkonen as a presidential candidate.

Both speeches contain something of each of those three elements. Pervukhin's singled out Kekkonen for praise along with President Paasikivi as the authors from the Finnish side of the policy of friendship for the USSR. Kekkonen the presidential candidate, far from declining the honor, implied that it had not been a simple task, by echoing the Soviet reference to "forces" seeking to prevent friendly Finnish-Soviet relations. Subtle differences were apparent, however, in Pervukhin's repeated mention of the "birth" or "creation" of such relations--a reminder of the Soviet charges of pre-war Finnish conspiracy against the USSR. Again, where Kekkonen seemed to assume that Finnish-Soviet friendship will endure forever, Pervukhin qualified his references to its future with the clause ". . . if the Soviet and Finnish nations sincerely strive for an intimate collaboration . . ." The whole-Soviet text, in fact, can be characterized as "dynamic" in

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its view of Finnish-Soviet relations, in contrast with Kekkonen's statements of satisfaction with matters as they are and avoidance of suggestion that this platonic friendship might ripen into an affair.

For what passes for an exchange of polite remarks, the two speeches contained surprisingly frank--though slanted--discussions of the Soviet motives in giving up Porkkala. Both recognized the undeniable duality in those motives by portraying the release as, on the one hand, the result of mutual confidence and friendship between the two countries and, on the other, as a move aimed at "the relief of international tension" (i.e., to provide an example to the United States). While seconding the latter thought, Kekkonen sought to give special weight to the former and added, in effect, that removal of an /unwelcome/ alien military base adjacent to a nation's capital is an event to be cherished for its own sake. From the Finnish political point of view this last was the paramount consideration.

The reactions of the Finnish press to events attending the return of Porkkala are diffused and hardly worth detailed reporting (see summary in Joint Weeka 5, February 2) overlaid as they are with the restraints acquired voluntarily in more than ten years of Finnish-Soviet "friendship." Most Finns would probably agree with the comment of Finland's leading Conservative newspaper, that the occupation of Porkkala had not, as was feared, resulted in foreign political intervention, but that it had been used as a political weapon domestically (by Finnish political parties, presumably). Breathing easier with its removal, the Finnish public will undoubtedly maintain a strong interest in the area, but--as a leading Helsinki reporter explained--it will be of the "human interest" type rather than focusing on such international significance as the area may have had, either bilaterally or globally. For at least this summer, indications are that Porkkala will be a tourist mecca.

For the Ambassador:

Grant G. Hilliker

Grant G. Hilliker
Second Secretary of Embassy

Enclosures:

1. Remarks of First Deputy Premier Pervukhin.
2. Remarks of Prime Minister Kekkonin in reply.

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TRANSLATION

Remarks of First Deputy Premier Pervukhin

The Honorable Mr. President of the Republic, the Honorable Mr. Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The protocol regarding the release of the Porkkala area and its property by the Soviet Union to Finland has just been signed. Thus the agreement made between the Soviet Union and Finland in Moscow in September last year, according to which the Soviet Union was to give up its right to use the Porkkala area as its military base and to withdraw the Soviet troops from this area, has been fulfilled. Unquestionably this decision is of great importance to mutual intercourse between our countries, as well as to international relations in general.

The fact that the Soviet Union is giving up, before the date which was set, its right to lease the Porkkala area is a result of the increasing mutual confidence and the birth of friendly relations between our countries, which have been achieved by means of joint efforts made by the Soviet and Finnish Governments.

In this connection I wish to give an acknowledgment to Finland's gifted statesman, Mr. President Paasikivi, and to Mr. Prime Minister Kekkonen, both of whom the Soviet Government has always found to be striving for mutual understanding and for the strengthening of friendship between our countries.

The Agreement of Friendship, Collaboration and Mutual Aid signed on April 6, 1948 has played an important role in the development of good relations between our countries.

This agreement provided a firm foundation for neighborly relations between the Soviet Union and Finland, and the signing of the agreement to extend its period of validity for 20 years, which took place in September 1955, opened to both countries broad prospects for further development of these relations.

The Soviet Government's decision to give up its right to use the Porkkala area, and to withdraw the Soviet armed forces from this area, is an important measure which aims at the relief of international tension. This decision confirms in a demonstrable manner the consistency of the peace-loving foreign policy of the USSR. As is known, the Soviet Union no longer has military bases on the territory of other states.

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The Soviet Government is of the opinion that the existence of the military bases of certain states on the territory of other states cannot help hampering the creation of a really permanent international peaceful collaboration characterized by mutual confidence.

The friendly relations which have been created between the Soviet Union and the Republic of Finland not only correspond to the national interests of our countries but they are also an important factor in preserving peace in Europe.

It can be said with assurance that if the Soviet and Finnish nations sincerely strive for an intimate collaboration, no one will succeed in preventing the development of friendly relations between our states.

The Soviet people think of the Finnish people with profound sympathy and respect the independence of the Republic of Finland.

It is known, for example, that after the great October Socialist Revolution the Soviet Government decided on December 31, 1917 to recognize Finland's independence.

As I hail the signing of the protocol regarding the release of the Porkkala area from the Soviet Union to Finland, I venture to declare my conviction that this act will more and more strengthen friendship and collaboration between the Soviet Union and the Republic of Finland.

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TRANSLATION

Remarks of Prime Minister Kekkonen

Mr. First Deputy Premier, Gentlemen:

The document which has now been signed is a very important achievement in the policy of friendship between Finland and the Soviet Union. To us it is undeniable proof of how well this policy of friendship has succeeded within a short period of time. This beautiful achievement encourages us to continue honestly and consistently to pursue the policy we have adopted.

In your speech, Mr. First Deputy Premier, you stated that the friendly relations between our countries accord with the national interests of our countries. We heard your words with great pleasure.

And it is true that it is in connection with the Porkkala agreement that we here in Finland have been pointing out the value and importance to Finland of the release of the Porkkala area. Our attitude in this can be readily understood, since the Porkkala military base has been 18 kilometers distant from our capital. We have emphasized that a policy which results in the return to Finland of an area leased for a base is valuable in the national sense.

We have protested the allegations from certain quarters that the policies prevailing between Finland and the Soviet Union have had no effect on the result reached and that it is solely due to the development of the international situation. We know that the policy of good neighborly relations, the agreement of cooperation and mutual assistance of 1948 and its strict observance have created the basis for the heartening result which becomes a fact today. Fenno-Soviet friendship is based on mutual confidence and respect, as well as on respect for the national interests of both parties. This is an enduringly strong foundation, and no forces can shake it.

From what I have just said it is easy to understand why we have viewed the Porkkala agreement from the standpoint of our own national interests. But it would be wrong to think that we close our eyes to the prospects which this question opens as far as international developments are concerned. The Soviet Government's decision to give up its right to use the Porkkala area as a naval base and to withdraw its armed forces from this area is both a token of an improvement in the international situation and a sign pointing the way to further relief of tension. It is our conception that the Porkkala agreement will of its own momentum pave the way for peaceful collaboration between nations.

I thank you, Mr. First Deputy Premier, for your friendly words

and thank the Soviet Government once more for having honored the occasion of this signing with the presence of such an esteemed Government delegation. Fenno-Soviet collaboration can proceed under favorable stars.